

## Chapter 6

# Helpful Information and Child Rearing Information Networks

## **1. Child-rearing information sources for parents**

### **1. Various child-rearing information sources**

Parents raising their children in an information-oriented society are surrounded by various child-rearing information sources such as the family, friends, specialists and various kinds of media.

According to time-series research on child-rearing information consciousness, information gathering behavior and information networks targeted at Japanese parents, it has become evident that the information sources the parents used differ according to the children's age and the characteristics of parents.

The respondents' spouses, friends in the neighborhood, and their own parents and preschool teachers were the main four sources parents chose as their most reliable sources. The finding also indicated that books and magazines on child rearing are an important source of information for parents with one year olds and less than one year old infants.

Also in the past few years, the number of parents gathering information through the internet and BBS (bulletin board system) has been growing rapidly, and the environment for gathering child-rearing information is constantly changing.

### **2. Information Sources used by Parents (Fig. 6-1)**

From "spouse" (69.8%) was chosen as the main information source. Following this, parents got information from "preschool teachers" (62.4%), "friends from their native country" (52.8%), "TV and radio" and "friends from outside the neighborhood" (both 46.4%) and "Japanese friends in the neighborhood" (44.8%).

Many of the parents consulted mainly with their spouses and preschool teachers and used information from friends from their native countries, friends from outside the neighborhood (friends from work or school, Japanese school, from same religion or internet groups) and TV and radio programs that provide the latest information.

44.8% of the parents got information from "Japanese friends in the neighborhood" probably because this percentage comes from the fact that 10.9% of the respondents have been living in Japan for over twenty years, including second and third generation immigrants, and 38.3% of the respondents speak Japanese very well.

### **3. Information source classified by parent nationality (Table 6-1)**

Some common characteristics could be seen when the information sources were classified by parent nationality. Since the number of respondents differs, we can only identify this is one of the trends, but we saw that every American parent gave "spouse" as their main information source. 87.2% of the North Korean parents got information from "preschool teachers," followed by Taiwanese, Japanese and Chinese parents. Aside from the Japanese TV, radio and newspapers, newspapers and other broadcasting media in Korean and Chinese are gradually taking hold.

Moreover, we can assume that the information on the internet, used by 30.6% of the Taiwanese parents and 27.6% of American parents, is in Chinese or English.

#### 4. Comments on reliable information sources

**Spouse:** “Since I don’t live with my parents or siblings, I discuss child-care mainly with my husband.” (day-care center, 4 yrs boy/mother 39 yrs / South Korean / 3 months)

**Own parents:** “I think that parents are the best role model” (day-care center 3 yrs girl / mother 29 yrs / Filipino / 8 yrs)

“I stay in touch with my mother through letters and telephone calls although she is in Peru” (day-care center, 3 yrs boy / mother 33 yrs / Peruvian / 11 yrs)

**Preschool teachers:** “I get information through the notebooks from the day-care center teacher concerning how my child behaves each day.

“This is the most reliable information and I appreciate the teacher’s efforts” (day-care center 2yrs boy / father 39 yrs / South Korean / 4 yrs)

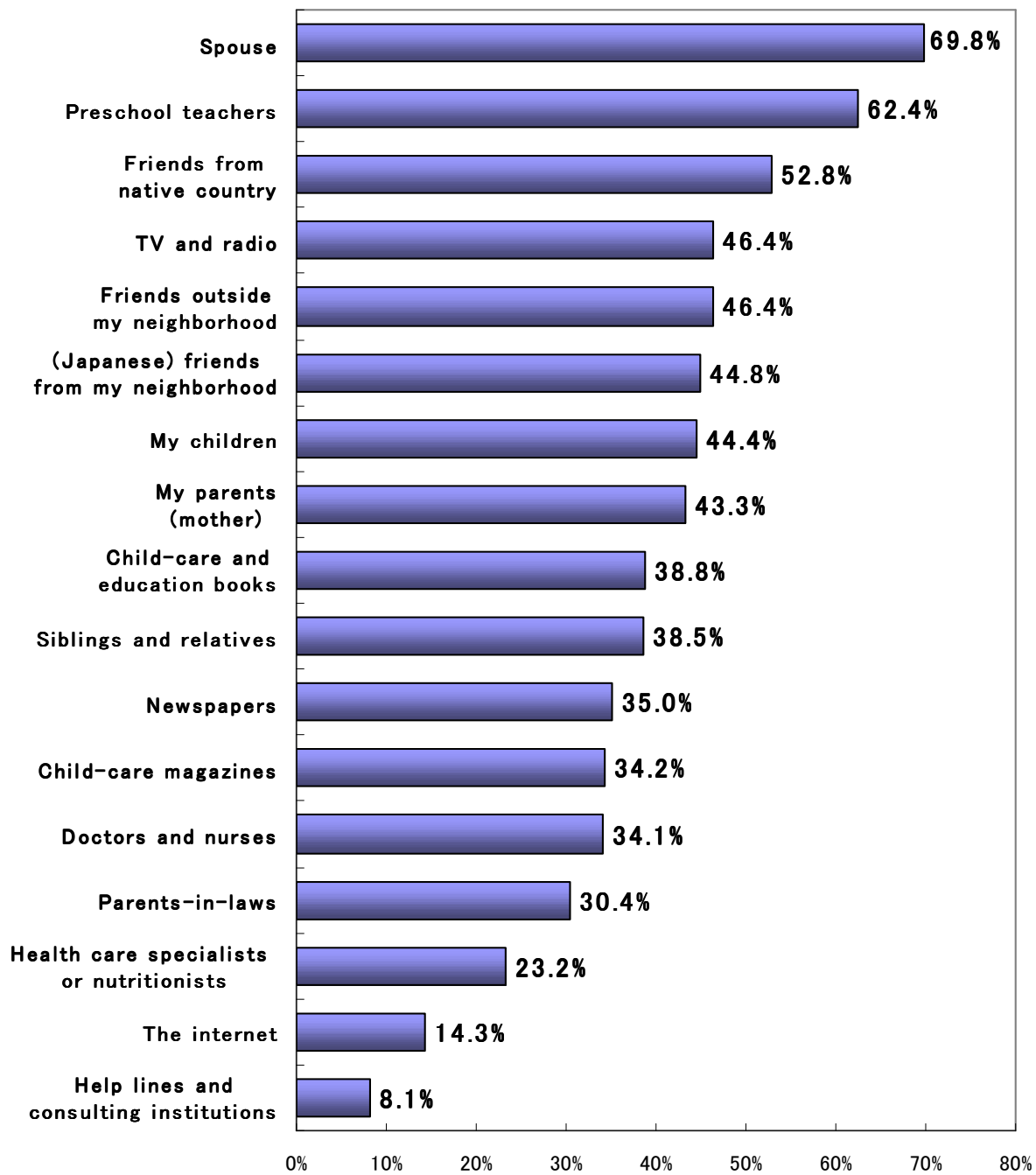
**Books on child-care:** “I get information through books on infant education and child-care. I find the books written by Brazilians the most reliable since they are from my culture” (day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 35 yrs / Brazilian / 9 yrs)

**Table6-1 Information sources of classified by parent’s nationality (Main 4)**

Order by Nationality		1	2	3	4
Order of Information Source used by All Parents					
1	<b>Spouse</b> 69.8%	<b>U.S.A.</b> 100.0% (29)	<b>Peru</b> 93.1% (27)	<b>North Korean</b> 84.6% (33)	<b>Thailand</b> 83.0% (39)
2	<b>Preschool teachers</b> 62.4%	<b>North Korean</b> 95.0% (38)	<b>Taiwan</b> 82.5% (52)	<b>Japan</b> 81.2% (220)	<b>China</b> 79.4% (409)
3	<b>Friends from native country</b> 52.8%	<b>North Korean</b> 87.2% (34)	<b>China</b> 72.6% (379)	<b>Taiwan</b> 65.1% (41)	<b>South Korean</b> 64.5% (198)
5	<b>TV and Radio</b> 46.4%	<b>Taiwan</b> 73.0% (46)	<b>China</b> 68.4% (353)	<b>North Korean</b> 64.1% (25)	<b>Japan</b> 56.4% (155)
6	<b>Japanese friends in the neighborhood</b> 44.8%	<b>North Korean</b> 66.7% (26)	<b>Japan</b> 63.2% (175)	<b>Taiwan</b> 60.9% (39)	<b>South Korean</b> 59.2% (180)
8	<b>Own parents</b> 43.3%	<b>Peru</b> 73.1% (19)	<b>North Korean</b> 69.2% (27)	<b>Japan</b> 60.4% (154)	<b>Vietnam</b> 60.0% (18)
11	<b>Newspapers</b> 35.0%	<b>China</b> 57.1% (133)	<b>North Korean</b> 53.8% (21)	<b>Taiwan</b> 53.2% (33)	<b>Japan</b> 49.4% (133)
16	<b>The internet</b> 14.3%	<b>Taiwan</b> 30.6% (19)	<b>U.S.A.</b> 27.6% (8)	<b>South Korean</b> 18.5% (55)	<b>North Korean</b> 17.9% (7)

%(number of people

**Fig. 6-1 Information sources most frequently used by Parents (very + somewhat often)**



N=2,002

## 2. Reliable information sources for parents and the reasons

### 1. Reliable information sources and the reasons (Table 6-2)

We asked the parents how much of the various information sources, ranging from families and friends to “discipline-education information sources,” such as books on child-care and newspapers, they used. After that, we asked which source was the most reliable, then we also asked how much important each judgment reason of reliable sources on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 4 (very important).

Table 6-2 is the results of the cross tabulation of the replies that were chosen as the most reliable sources and the reasons they rated them as “very important.” The table shows that parents choose the important information with definite reasons.

#### 1) Spouse

The most common reason the respondents chose their “spouse” as their information source was because they were “family members” (35.4%), followed by “to raise my child the way my husband (wife) was brought up,” “easy access and personal consultation,” and “to keep matters private.” The reason they chose their spouse as a reliable source was because they felt strongly their “*family identity*” as we can see from comments such as “to raise and educate children according to our family standards” and “to keep matters private” and their “*family awareness*” such as “to raise my child the way my husband (wife) was brought up”

#### 2) Own parents

The most common reason was “to raise my child the way I was brought up” (22.2%) followed by “family members,” “to get greater experience,” “to keep matters private,” and “to raise and educate children according to our family standards.” As was the case for the respondents choosing their spouse, “*family awareness*” and “*family identity*” seemed to be of importance for them in choosing their parents as reliable sources.

However, the number of respondents choosing their parents for the reason that “to get greater experience” was the highest among all the information sources.

#### 3) Preschool teachers

“To have professional knowledge” (20.2%) was why some main reason the parents chose preschool teachers as their most reliable source. Following this reason were “to get useful and detailed advice,” “they know children very well,” and “easy access and personal consultation.” Here, it was seen that parents are looking for professional information that is “*practical*” from teachers knowing a lot about children.

#### 4) Child-care and education Books

The most common reason for choosing technical books was “to get the latest information” (18.4%), followed by “to get professional information,” “to get precise information,” “to get useful and detailed advice,” and “to get greater experience.” Child-care and education books were evaluated both from a “*technical reliability*” (get the latest and precise information) and “*practical*” (contain great experience, useful advise) point of view.

## 2. Most reliable information sources according to the child age (Fig 6-2)

Figure 6-2 shows the 4 most reliable information sources according to child age. Parents with children less than 1 year olds rely on “child-care and education books.” Among parents with 4 year olds, there seemed to be a significant number that have been in Japan for less than 3 years, and probably because they are poor in Japanese, the percentage of the parents with 4 year olds choosing “spouse” as their reliable source was particularly noticeable.

The percentage of parents choosing “preschool teachers” increased among parents with 2 year olds. This is because during the language development of 2 year olds, the parents may face problems of dealing with their child’s native language and Japanese. Parents rely on “own parents” at every important stage of their children’s growth, which indicates that no matter where one is, own parents are a great support.

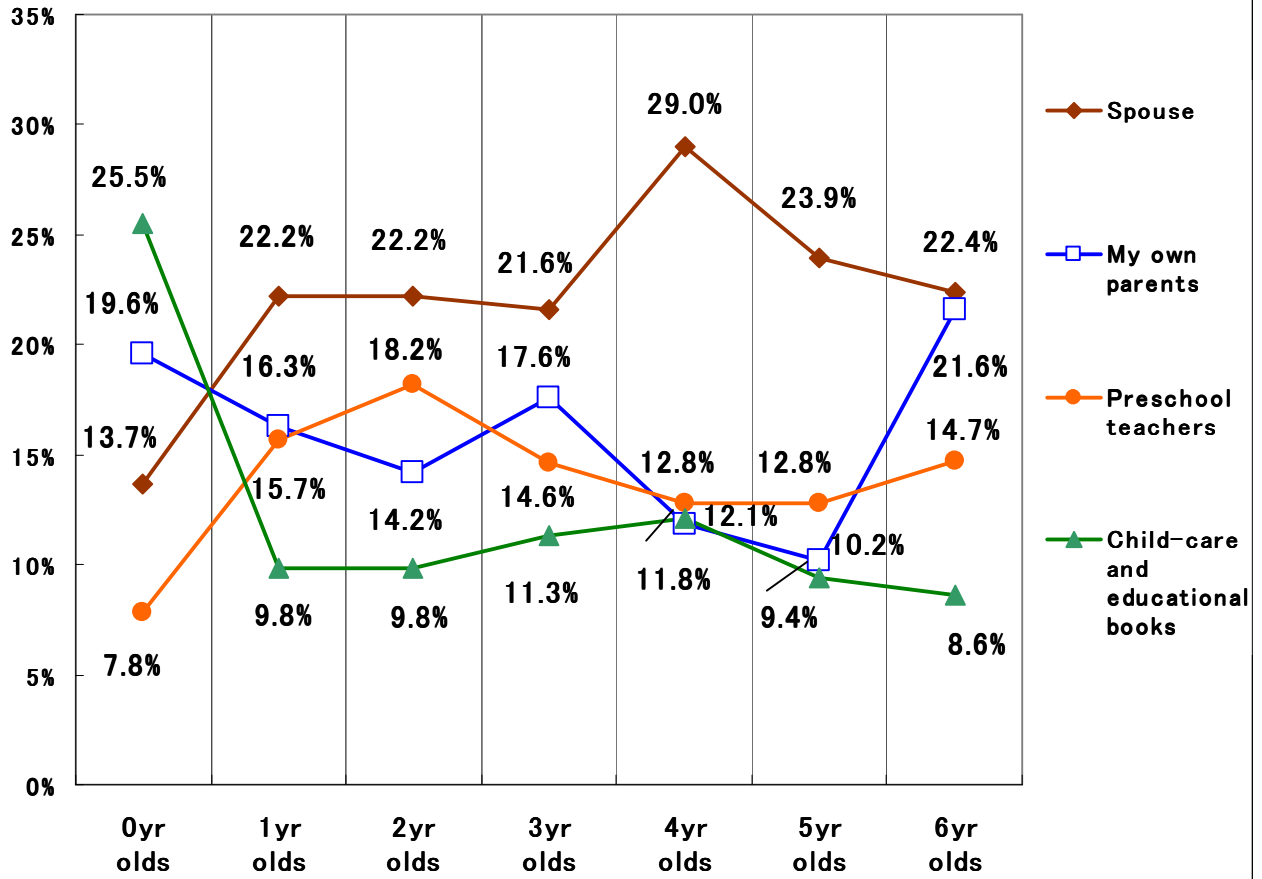
**Table 6-2 Most reliable information sources and the reasons (reason rated “very important”)**

Order	Spouse	% (Freq.)	Order	My parents	% (Freq.)
1	My family member	35.4%(152)	1	To raise my child the way I was brought up	22.2%( 51)
2	To raise my child the way my spouse was brought up	30.6%( 49)	2	My family member	20.5%( 88)
3	To raise my child according to our family standards	29.5%(134)	3	They have great experience	17.8%(141)
4	Easy access and personal consultation	27.7%(210)	4	To keep matters private	17.7%( 74)
5	To keep matters private	24.2%(101)	5	According to our family standards	16.7%( 76)

Order	Preschool teachers	% (Freq.)	Order	Child-care and education books	% (Freq.)
1	To have professional knowledge	20.2%(116)	1	To get the latest information	18.4%( 70)
2	To get useful and detailed advice	16.8%(120)	2	To get technical information	17.7%(102)
3	They have a lot of experience	16.7%(132)	3	To get precise information	15.1%( 87)
4	To know children very well	16.0%(120)	4	To get useful and detailed advice	13.2%( 94)
5	Easy access and personal consultation	14.5%(110)	5	They contain good experiences	12.7%(100)

Fig. 6-2 The 4 most reliable information sources by child age



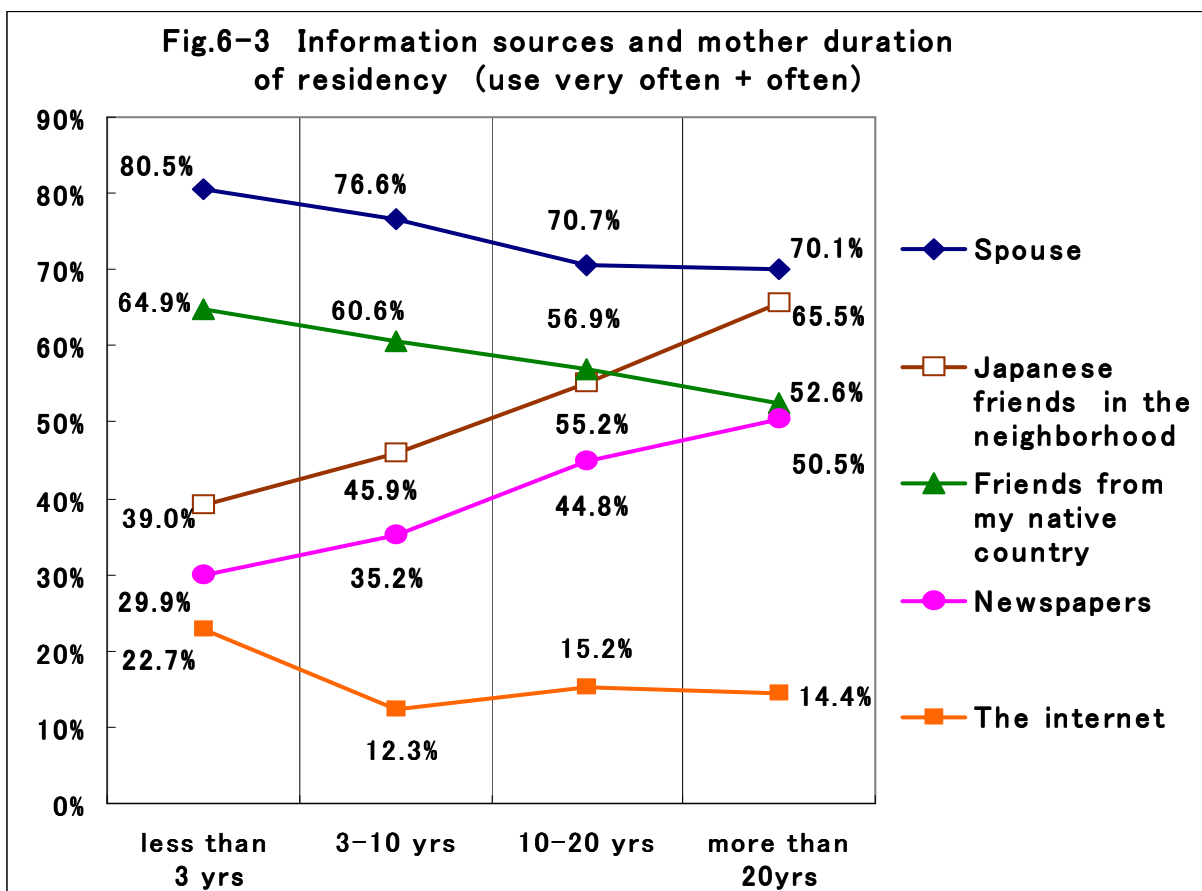
N=1, 509

### 3. Child-rearing information network for mothers

#### 1. Information sources and duration of mother residency (Fig 6-3)

83.2% of the respondents in this research were mothers. Here, we focused mainly on the information sources used by mothers. Figure 6-3 shows how the sources changed according to the duration of mother residency.

The source that decreased as their years living in Japan increased were “spouses” and “friends from native country.” On the other hand, the sources that were used more as the duration increased were “Japanese friends in the neighborhood” and “newspapers.” We could see that when the mothers are not accustomed to life in Japan, they rely on their husbands or people from their native country, but the longer they are in Japan, they get closer to their friends in the neighborhood and gradually are able to read the newspapers. As to mothers who had been in Japan for less than three years used the internet the most.



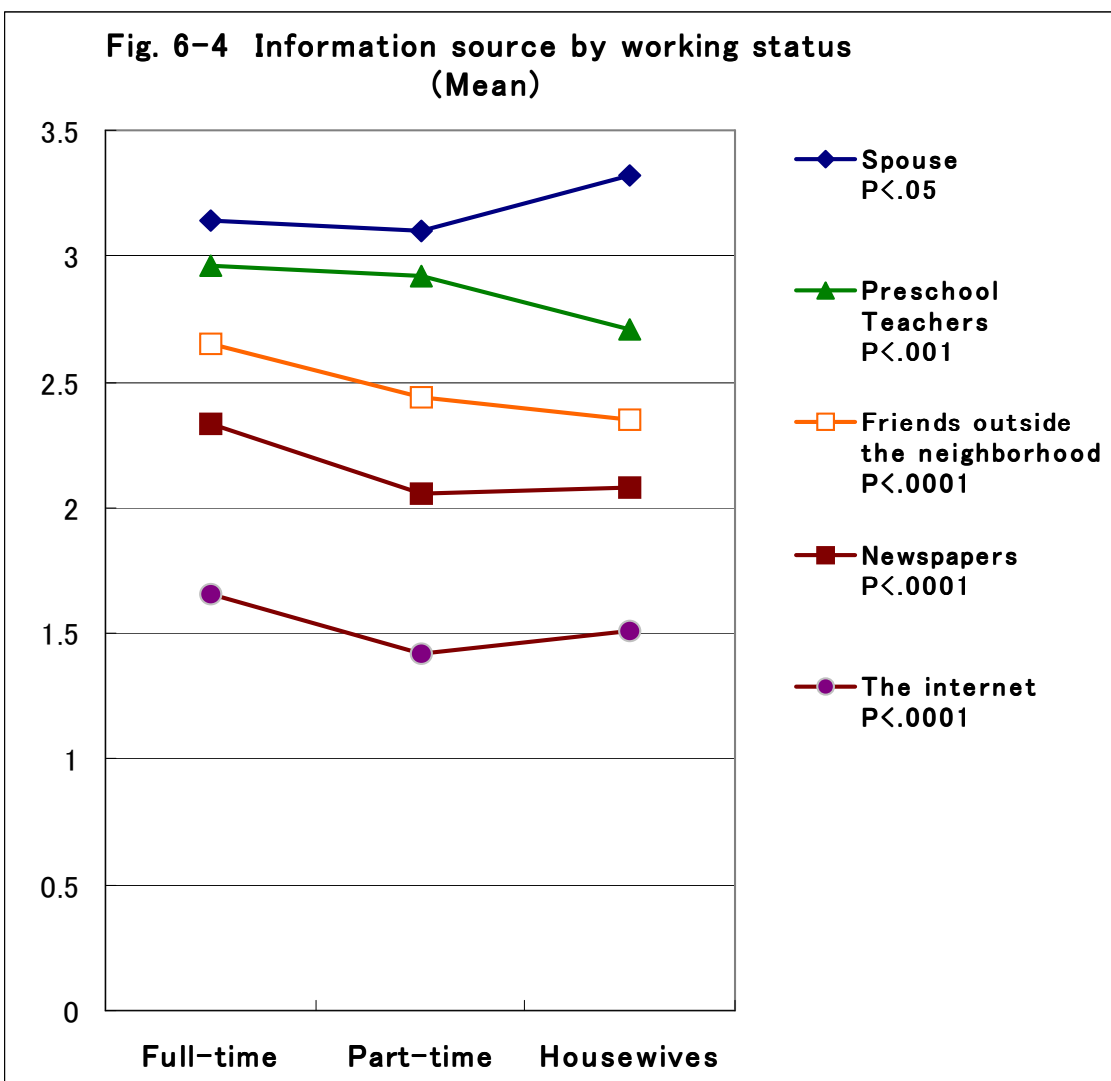


## 2. Information source according to working status (Fig 6-4)

Figure 6-4 illustrates the results we got by comparing the mean of the information sources used with the mothers working status.

Housewives gathered information from their “spouses (husbands),” and the percentage was significantly more than those of part-time workers. “Friends outside the neighborhood” included people from work, and many of the full-time workers cited this source. “Newspapers” and “The internet” were also used more by full-time workers compared to part-time workers, so the results showed that mothers working full-time used these sources the most, followed by housewives, then mothers working part-time.

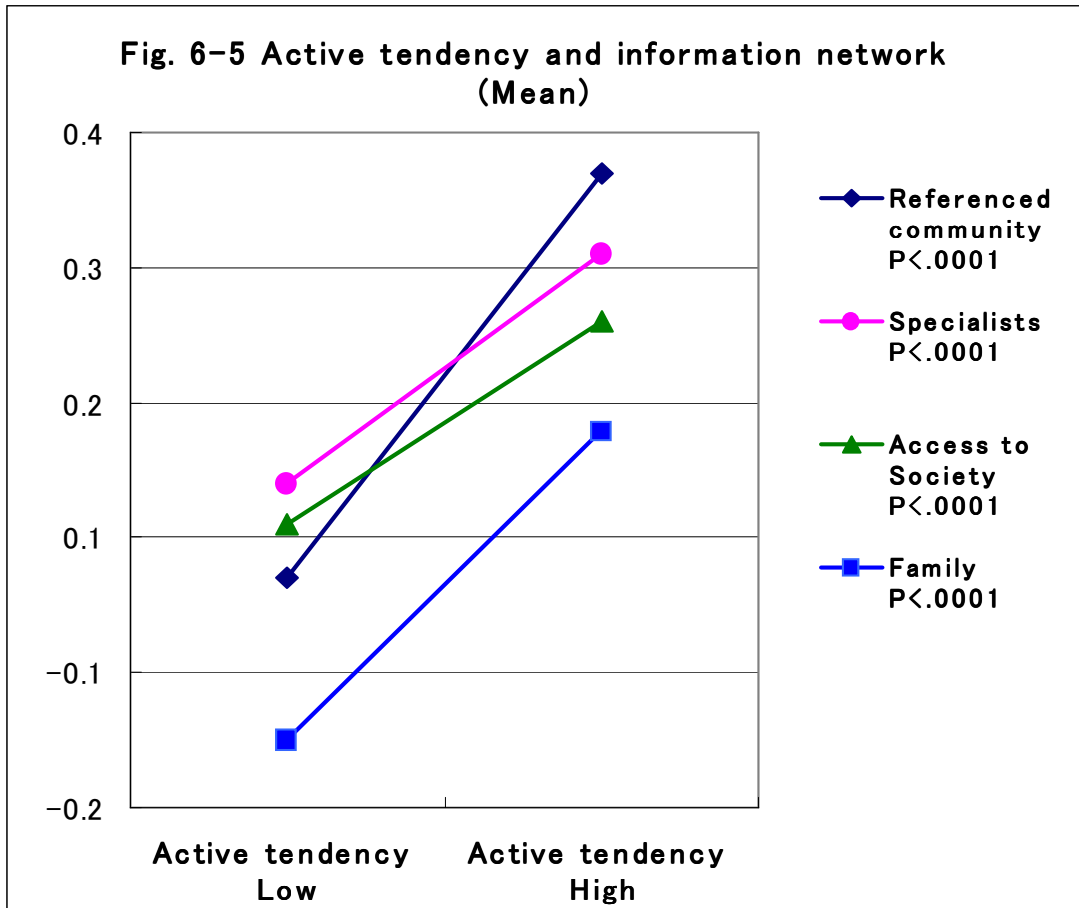
Mothers working full-time and part-time got information from “preschool teachers” more than housewives. We found out that when compared to the mothers on working status, mothers working part-time did not gather information as much as the mothers working full-times and housewives from people around them or the media.



N=1,357

### 3. Socially interacting mothers and information networks (Figure 6-5)

Child-rearing information sources can be divided into several network groups, but as shown in Figure 6-5, socially interacting mothers used significantly more of the “*referenced community*,” “*specialists*,” “*access to society*” and “*family*” than less socially interacting mothers.



N=645

Column: International comparison of the information sources used by mothers

Figure 6-6 shows a comparison of the child-rearing information sources that are used by Chinese mothers living in China, Chinese mothers living in Japan and Japanese mothers.

The numbers on the x-axis are the means of the replies based on a scale of 1, “do not use at all,” to 4, “use frequently.” The boxed numbers are the replies with the highest percentage in that particular group.

The main sources in order of preference for Chinese mothers living in China were:

- 1) Preschool teachers
- 2) Spouse
- 3) Child-rearing books
- 4) Child-rearing magazines
- 5) Newspapers

The order of preference for Chinese mothers living in Japan were:

- 1) Spouse
- 2) Preschool teachers
- 3) Friends from the same native country
- 4) TV and radio
- 5) My children

For the Japanese mothers, the order of preference were:

- 1) Friends in the neighborhood
- 2) Spouse
- 3) Preschool teachers,
- 4) My mother
- 5) My children

In China, this survey was held in a city where expectations are increasing towards education for the only child in the family. There, sources such as books, TV and radio are developing rapidly. Perhaps for this reason, parents are becoming more interested in the media dealing with child-rearing and TV education programs. Excluding their spouses, the information sources that they used were “preschool teachers, child-rearing books, and newspapers.” This showed that they preferred authoritative and technical information (please see Chapter 5 column).

On the other hand, Chinese mothers living in Japan relied more on their “spouses or friends from the same native country,” and we saw that their relationships had grown. For Japanese mothers, we found that they exchange information with friends with similar-aged children more than they do with their spouses, mainly because their spouses are too busy. It seems that when necessary, they turn to their spouses, preschool teachers and their mothers for advice.

The Japanese mothers who frequently discussed matters with “their children” did not have many child-rearing concerns. Both the Chinese mothers living in Japan and the Japanese mothers gave “my children” as their fifth ranked information source.

Chinese mothers in China: N=455

Chinese mothers in Japan: N=565

Japanese mothers in Japan: N=1,704

**Fig.6-6 International comparison of the information sources used by mothers (Mean)**

